

**Mayor Report – By Shawn Keough
Prepared on June 17, 2020**

Hello Residents and Council,

Here is my report of recent activities and my calendar of planned Dexter activities looking ahead:

And the Signs say....

Within the past week or so, two extremely large signs have been placed on the City owned property at the corner of Dexter Ann Arbor Road and Meadowview. These signs are each 32 square feet in size and were placed under a poor interpretation of a section of our sign ordinance related to allowing construction signs. The signs say, “Proposed Future Home of the Dexter Fire Station”. In my opinion, these signs have been erected way too early in our facility improvement process and they are also, in my opinion, much larger than needed (which is ironic in a way, because the proposed fire station shown on the signs is also way too large in my opinion). But more importantly, the City DOES NOT have any construction planned for a new fire station. The City DOES NOT have any site plan approval for a new fire station. And last but certainly not least, the City DOES NOT have the necessary funding, currently estimated at nearly \$8,000,000 if you include space for our Sheriff, in place for a new fire station. The City is not close to construction, yet these signs have been placed simply to draw interest to the project. We wouldn’t let a developer place a sign in this manner without approvals like that.

The real question here is interest. Is there interest in building a new fire station? And what is the community willing to spend? Those are the questions I have been asking for several years. Is there interest in building a new fire station? And what is the entire community willing to spend? I suppose you could ask yourself what we need to spend...that would also be a very good question. Four members of our current City Council have indicated that they are interested in building a new station, despite opportunities to improve our current station at much less cost. Three members of City Council, of which I am one, feel the proposed fire station shown on the signs is way too large and not required to improve the service that DAFD currently provides. One reality is that the location proposed on Dexter Ann Arbor is one of the few vacant locations in the City. Another reality is that the majority of the district that our station responds to is in entirely the other direction (i.e. north and northwest of the City).

There have been very few members of our community that have indicated to me that they feel we need a new fire station. Our current station may be old, and is in need of some renovation, but its close proximity to our historic downtown, our public park and trails and its central location within the DAFD coverage district make it a very good fire station. It has served us well and is structurally in very good condition. I am in favor of renovating it so that it can continue to serve our community, but not at a cost of nearly \$8,000,000. In today’s times, I feel there are better ways to spend the community’s tax dollars. As I have encouraged in the past, I would welcome your input on this topic.

So back to the signs...what do they really say? Do residents understand why they were placed? Do you support the idea suggested by the signs? I think it is important to ask these questions and to be receptive to feedback. These signs were placed following a motion and vote by City Council on March 9, 2020. I did not vote in favor of placing these signs, nor do I support building a fire station at that location. The proposed fire station shown in the pictures is 22,000 square feet in size. Only 2 full time fire fighters are assigned to the City station, plus the Chief 8 hours a day. As most residents know, the City is part of an area wide fire department called Dexter Area Fire Department or DAFD for short. Our community partners in DAFD are Dexter Township and Webster Township. The City’s percentage of runs within the DAFD district is less than 30%. The percentage of runs is increasing in the Townships. Why, I ask, should the City build such a large station when over 70% of the runs are not within the City? Wester Township is currently building there own station. Why do we also need to?

The fact that these signs have been placed when no construction has been authorized is misleading and a misuse of our authority as a Government body. The signs were approved under the premise that they are construction signs, but there is no construction planned. I am writing about this topic today because I am bothered by where we are in our process to improve our facilities. In 2019, City Council held two public meetings to seek public input on ideas for improving two important facilities – our City Offices and our fire station. The public input that was provided encouraged City Council to define options for both City offices and fire station and then bring those options back before the public for comment. Somehow, we have forgotten the feedback from our constituents. I am writing today to encourage my fellow Council members and the public to encourage us to finish what we started, which was a thorough evaluation of the facilities and a full recommendation on how to approve both of them. We have only partially completed our assignment. If anyone wishes to contact me about this topic, my email and phone number are below. My goal in writing this today is also to increase interest on this topic. Thank you in advance for your future input.

Board, Commission and Committee Appointment Recommendations

On the June 8, 2020 Consent Agenda, City Council approved several members of various boards, commissions and committees to new terms. I inadvertently left a couple people off the memo that were supposed to be recommended for additional terms. Thus, I have some additional recommendations in this packet for Council to affirm. They are part of the consent agenda.

Recent Activities since the June 8, 2020 City Council meeting

June 15, 2020 – City Council meeting (Special) – we added this meeting to review and approve an emergency ordinance (which is allowed per our charter) to allow the expansion of outdoor seating and retail opportunities in public areas (i.e. streets, alleys, etc....).

Upcoming Activities

June 18, 2020 – Downtown Development Authority meeting

June 18, 2020 – Dexter Area Fire Board meeting

June 22, 2020 – City Council meeting – the primary goal for this meeting will be for City Council to adopt the 2020 – 2021 Budget.

July 13, 2020 – City Council meeting with Facilities Work Session prior to the meeting

Given that our next City Council meeting will be held in three weeks (due to a fifth Monday in June), I would like to wish everyone a Happy 4th of July! It is hard to believe that summer of 2020 is underway. I look forward to seeing you around our town (but still from 6 feet away) 😊

All the best to everyone! Please stay safe and enjoy Dexter!

Shawn Keough
Mayor, City of Dexter

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